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POLITICAL WRITING AND CLASS

Edmund Richardson

Few corners of nineteenth-century London had so low a reputation as Wynch Street.¹ ‘In the whole of London there is not a dirtier, narrower, and more disreputable thoroughfare.’² Along this alley near Drury Lane, tall Elizabethan houses crowded in on one another, blocking out the light. ‘The picturesque appearance of these tenements compensates but ill for their being mainly dens of vice and depravity, inhabited by the vilest offscourings of the enormous city. [...] Wynch Street, Drury Lane, is, morally and physically, about the shadiest street I know.’³ ‘No good, it was long supposed, could ever come out of Wynch Street.’⁴

In July of 1856, nevertheless, the pickpockets and apprentice thieves⁵ could barely find space to stand – so great was the crush of carriages and liveried drivers, elaborate dresses and tall hats, crowding into that alley. Every evening, ‘Drury Lane is rendered well-nigh impassable by splendid equipages which have conveyed dukes and marquises and members of Parliament’ to Wynch Street – and to a remarkable performance at the Olympic Theatre, which stood there. *Medea; or The Best of Mothers with a Brute of a Husband*⁶ was a breath-taking burlesque: knockabout, outrageous, and extraordinary. As Hall and Macintosh have explored,⁷ it made Medea – the proud ancient princess, descended from a god – into ‘the moody virago of low life’⁸: a penniless contemporary woman, evicted from the workhouse,⁹ begging on the street-corner, and with a serious grudge against the British aristocracy. The burlesque’s author, Robert Brough, was possessed of a ‘deep vindictive hatred of wealth and rank and respectability.’¹⁰ He wrote, and worked, and dreamed towards a ‘bonfire’¹¹ of Britain’s elite.¹² Yet here they were: tipsy and happy, cheering his ragged Medea and laughing along with his radical vision of the ancient world. So loud did the laughter grow, so carefree the wealthy listeners, that Frederick Robson – who played Medea – would ‘at times when his audience was convulsed with merriment [...] come to a halt and gravely observe “This is not a comic song.”’¹³ Outside, the coachmen waited in the foul-smelling corners of Wynch Street, and heard the laughter redouble.

As Hall has noted, ancient Greece and Rome played a central role in British discourses of politics and class, throughout the period covered by this volume.¹⁴ The ancient world was

leveraged, time and again, by those wishing to participate in the most important debates of the age. Classics was how Prime Ministers and factory labourers defined themselves – and sought to re-shape their roles in society. But Brough’s piece of workhouse Greek, a call for revolution staged in a filthy alley to an eager audience packed with the privileged,¹⁵ is a marker of how complex such engagements with antiquity were. The connections between classics and class were rarely straightforward, and often fragile; the power of the past was simultaneously one of the time’s fixed stars – and one of its most frustrating mirages.

This chapter will explore what was at stake in putting classics and class¹⁶ together, between 1780 and 1880. It will examine the politicians and aristocrats who peppered their speeches with quotations from ancient authors, and ask how effectively classical knowledge functioned as a badge of privilege. Could it be used to assert one’s own elevated status, and put an upstart in his place – or would the upstart pay no attention to the put-down, apart from a fleeting giggle? It will then turn to members of the working classes who pursued classical knowledge – from a milkmaid-poet to Hardy’s Jude Fawley – and ask what effects that pursuit had on their roles in society. How comfortable was it to be a milkmaid who wrote about the ancient world? Finally, it will ask what difference the classics could truly make within politics – looking at a succession of reformers and revolutionaries who relied upon the ancient world in their efforts to re-shape British society. It aims to capture the breadth and sophistication of the relationship between classics and class – why aristocrats and workmen alike framed their lives through the ancient world. Its narrative is of the gradual erosion of a once-privileged bond, between the classics and Britain’s elite.

THE RULERS OF THE PAST

The enormous bulk of elite classicism is inescapable. From schools to statues, from pamphlets to plays, the rulers of Britain took the ancient world with them wherever they went, like the carapace of a tortoise. Stray has explored the inner workings of this culture in rich detail. He argues that classical knowledge was ‘the possession and the symbol of the educated gentleman’¹⁷ – an intellectual grounding shared by the elite, and a passport to social acceptance for the rising middle classes. While the links between classics and the privileged classes were never serene,

they are nevertheless inescapable. Classical knowledge, for many, literally made the upper classes:

The “great broad-shouldered, genial English country gentleman” [...] is not more indebted for his stalwart frame and high courage to the cricket and football of his boyhood than he is to his early familiarity with the noble thoughts and lucid language of the great classics of antiquity for the intuitive good sense and rapid perception of what is right and becoming in practical life, which gives him nine-tenths of his social influence.¹⁸

Classical knowledge was not simply a marker of social status, in other words: it was *the* marker. Its presence – or absence – was the most reliable way to recognize one’s equals, one’s superiors, and one’s inferiors. In certain circles, ‘a line of Horace quoted and recognized,’ as Skilton puts it, became ‘a social password.’¹⁹ ‘Whenever the higher ranks of society are convened [...] any circumstances which may indicate the want of a classical education, any blunders which no person classically educated would commit, are apt to create a smile of ridicule and contempt.’²⁰ Those who learned their Latin, however, were assured that it would function ‘explicitly [as] a means to social distinction’²¹ – a key to the highest ranks of society. As Andrew Amos put it, in a lecture written to inspire schoolboys:

I entreat you, therefore, not only to cultivate the classics for their own sake, but also to cultivate them as they form the golden link that will unite persons of all professions and pursuits however once separated by birth or by fortune; and as they will enable you to maintain your position in society, by means of heartfelt ties.²²

In George Eliot’s *Adam Bede*, the vain and rich Arthur Donnithorne is ready to impress the world with his classics – but he will do so sullenly. For him, classical knowledge is merely a useful ‘adornment’ to his public persona – not an object of ‘heartfelt’ commitment:

“It’s well if I can remember a little inapplicable Latin to adorn my maiden speech in Parliament six or seven years hence. ‘Cras ingens iterabimus aequor,’ and a few shreds of that sort, will perhaps stick to me, and I shall arrange my opinions so as to introduce them.

But I don't think a knowledge of the classics is a pressing want to a country gentleman; as far as I can see, he'd much better have a knowledge of manures.”²³

Open a volume of nineteenth-century parliamentary debates, and the Latin comes thick and fast: Amos’ argument that the classics formed a common language, a ‘golden link’ connecting the privileged classes seems amply justified. In 1858, *Punch* could barely find a word of English in the Budget Debate, which ‘for some reason was carried on in Latin’:

Sir Cornewall Lewis, who is a very classically-minded man, expressed, in a quotation from the *Art of Poetry*, his opinion of Mr. Disraeli as a financier: –

“Serpit humi tutus nimium timidusque procellae.” [...]

But Mr. Disraeli, who is also a person of cultivation, was not going to be put down in that style, and sending for a Delphin Horace out of the Commons Library, he looked up a *humum* for Sir George’s *humi*, and responded: –

“Dum vitat humum, nubes et inania captet.”

Which may be expounded: –

“With that nose in the air, how superbly he spoke,
But all his objections are bottles of smoke.”

This was conclusive, and Mr. Disraeli had it all his own way.²⁴

Tattered Latin, much-tormented, was as common as dust within the walls of Parliament (Greek was rarer – and still more rarely understood).²⁵ The heyday of Parliament’s obsession with (handy extracts from) the classics was the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when, as Wiesen puts it, ‘no important speech would have been deemed complete without its due portion of classical quotations.’²⁶ The flow of Parliamentary Latin waxed and waned throughout the nineteenth century – slowing for a time after the 1832 Reform Act – before diminishing steadily in its later years.²⁷ Scholars have not been kind to this practice. Jenkyns thought it ‘a superficial

and often spurious indicator of the speaker's learning.'²⁸ For Vince, 'it was an easy trick, enabling orators, who had nothing of value to say, to commend their worthless contributions by a cheap and tawdry decoration.'²⁹ In the age of rotten boroughs and a Parliament devoid of working-class representation, Latin quotations traded back and forth signified membership of an exclusive club. Like a secret handshake, this was a ritual satisfied by the mere appearance of understanding – and politicians struggled to preserve that veneer. Disraeli himself found it trying, as Blake remarks; he 'endeavoured to turn himself into a classical scholar, but it is doubtful whether he ever really attained the knowledge of classical authors which he was inclined to claim in later life.'³⁰

For Britain's elite, exposing their Latin in public was a key means of recognizing and connecting with their peers – but it begs the question, what connection did this practice have with the classical past? The desired effect was something like the linguistic equivalent of a tall top hat – quoting Japanese at sufficient volume might have served as well (or, for that matter, Maori). But the elite's reliance upon the classics was far more fundamental than this superficial practice of quotation might suggest. The ancient world can be found at the root of many key debates over the shape of contemporary British society. It was the foundation upon which much political rhetoric was built.³¹ Prior to the passage of the 1832 Reform Act, for instance, antiquity was almost inescapable in Parliament and the newspapers:

SIR G. MURRAY argued that it was not necessary to add additional members [of Parliament] to the metropolis. The great danger of the bill was that it would give the whole power of the state to the House of Commons (*cheers*). He believed that it was the democracy which overturned Athens, Rome. [...]

MR. C. GRANT differed with the right hon. gentleman who had just sat down, in attributing the fall of the Roman empire to the infusion of democracy into the state. He (Mr. C. Grant) attributed the event to the extension of military tyranny and despotism (*cheers*).³²

The ancient past could be cast as a trusted guide, no matter what one's political affiliations. A dizzying – and often sophisticated – range of lessons for the present day was drawn from the past.³³

But glib invocation of the ancient world within British political discourse was too widespread to be taken entirely seriously, as *Punch*'s satire of the 1858 Budget Debate shows (*Punch* frequently put British politicians in togas – rarely to their advantage)³⁴. A politician who built his rhetoric upon the classics might find that he was building himself into an irresistible object of satire:

MR. ST. LEMPRIERE. Gentlemen, and scholars. After the able remarks of my proposer on the fifth proposition of Euclid, and of my seconder upon the second aorist, I do not think that I need declaim to you at any great length. My honourable opponent has, I may say, succeeded in damaging his own case far more than I could hope to do. [...] He spoke to you of Athens, but I believe that he could not tell you on which side of it ran the Ilissus, nor whether the statue of Athena Promachus stood on the Acropolis or the Eleusinian Road.³⁵

‘That excusable eagerness for the quotation which is the characteristic of the educated gentleman’³⁶ was satirized as eagerly as it was practiced, throughout the nineteenth century.³⁷ A style bursting with classical references and importance could become a sign of insecurity, rather than of power. (Two learned gentlemen might meet for the first time, quote Latin at one another, then, their bona fides established, each attempt to borrow money with no small desperation.)³⁸

Indeed, reliance upon the ancient world – a public identity based upon it – was frequently a marker of weakness, not strength, within social and political discourse. The appropriation of the classics by the British elite was, for many, a curious form of pretence, ripe for interruption. In Angus Reach's *Natural History of Humbugs*, the transparently artificial nature of upper-class classicism was dwelt upon, in a vignette of life in the Belgravia home of ‘the stately Mrs. Firmcounter and the starched Mr. Firmcounter’.³⁹ Their public personae (Figure 1), exhibited to the world in the grand drawing-room, were ‘just like the *poses plastiques* and just as theatrical’⁴⁰ – a set of aspirational Olympian deities for the modern day. Once the visitors took their leave, and the need to impress departed with them, the family's classical poses were (Figure 2) abruptly dropped.



*Figure 1: 'Up goes the curtain, and there stand Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Mars, Venus, and Adonis, all very fine and imposing.'*⁴¹



Figure 2: ‘Down goes the curtain, and there remains Mr. Muggs, Mrs. Muggs, and the younger branches of that talented pantomime family. Never mind! they have “kept up appearance.”’⁴²

The Firmcounters’ performance, Reach suggests, was not only absurdly laboured, but also cheapening. Rather than reinforcing the status of this prosperous London household, its deadly classical determination reduced them to a ‘pantomime family’, and renamed their patriarch ‘Mr. Muggs.’ The presence of the classics in this drawing-room is a marker of anxiety about status – an attempt to shore it up as obvious as Mr St. Lempriere’s.

The debris of the Firmcounters’ performance lies around haphazardly in Figure 2 – a helmet here, a helmet there. Reach was interested in how shallow classical culture could be. While some of Britain’s elite were genuinely and passionately committed to the study of the ancient world – Gladstone’s decades-long obsession with Homer might come to mind⁴³ – others put down their Latin with relief, as soon as no-one was watching. The practice of avoiding and forgetting one’s classical education was as entrenched in British society as that education itself. In *The Mill on*

the Floss, Tom Tulliver sought to reassure a sceptical uncle that he would soon be free of his classical knowledge:

“But, uncle,” said Tom, earnestly, “I don't see why the Latin need hinder me from getting on in business. I shall soon forget it all” [...]

“Ay, ay, that's all very well,” said Mr. Deane; “but it doesn't alter what I was going to say. Your Latin and rigmarole may soon dry off you, but you'll be but a bare stick after that.”⁴⁴

Aristocratic claims to know better were almost too easy to satirize. (One Oxford undergraduate, asked for the location of Athens in his final examination, answered ‘In the Hebrides.’⁴⁵) ‘Bred at Universities where [...] hints of the immortal classics drive the honestest youth to bitter beer, tobacco, Curacao punch, and a season in Paris,’⁴⁶ the upper classes emerged into the world having ‘forgotten as much Greek as Liddell remembers.’⁴⁷ Such depictions are desperately partial, of course – but the incompetent classical student was a stock satiric figure in Victorian Britain.⁴⁸

The identity of Britain's elite, during this period, was inextricably bound up with their knowledge of the classics. Within discourse, however, commitment to the classics was fluid and unstable: it was forever being professed, forever being foresworn, forever being ridiculed. In consequence, it was never a dependable marker of authority, or of one's right to rule. A public persona too dependent upon the past might elicit not respect, but a ‘smile of ridicule and contempt.’⁴⁹ By the middle of the nineteenth century, in particular, crying ‘humbug’ was a far from uncommon reaction. When the powerful and the prosperous sought to use the past to command the present, there was no firm place for them to stand. There was only an anxious social negotiation, and a reception which teetered between admiration and contempt.

LOOKING DOWN

Nevertheless, throughout this period, the elite drew upon the ancient world to justify and to reinforce their privileged status – and contemporary class boundaries. The classics functioned as an amplifier of social exclusion. This can be seen in the frequent ‘lessons’ from the past which

were offered to the lower classes: ancient examples were lined up to demonstrate the ‘rightness’ of a limited electoral franchise, aristocratic privilege, and the status quo in general. In 1829, when pressure for political reform was growing, the classics were there to warn of the consequences of democracy:

A democracy were the best government in the world, did each man value his share of political privilege above personal interests: it is the worst because each member of the body politic is willing to sell his fragment of sovereignty to any purchaser. [...] It was by the cry against the aristocracy that Rome and Athens fell into the hands of military adventurers.⁵⁰

When Hugh Seymour Tremenheere compiled his *Political Experience of the Ancients, in its Bearing Upon Modern Times* in 1852, he was forthright about the value of his undertaking. ‘The truths embodied in these treatises are [...] the staple of the knowledge and convictions of every well-educated man of sound judgment. [...] It appears to me, therefore, that I am rendering a service to those who are unable to read them in their original languages, by affording them the opportunity of mastering their sum and substance.’⁵¹ However, his collection of ancient political texts, ‘singularly applicable to modern times’,⁵² is very carefully edited – and designed to dissuade its intended lower-class readers from pressing for contemporary reform. Some key ancient works, in consequence, receive short shrift – with Seymour Tremenheere insisting that ‘Plato’s Ideal Republic cannot be said now to have much practical value. It is, indeed, remarkable as the source of many of the doctrines of modern socialism and communism.’⁵³

This kind of remorselessly partial classicism was – in a pattern which is becoming familiar – cheerfully satirized by its audience. In the midst of the debates over political reform in 1831, the *Athenaeum* relished the futility of such attempts to influence working-class opinion, in both ancient Rome and the present day. The patricians of Rome hired writers to do their bidding, while the contemporary elite had ‘the periodical press’ – but both were equally ineffective in defending ‘those youthful patricians who deemed their birth an excuse for aristocratic insolence and oligarchical tyranny.’ The article’s ‘patricians’ could, by design, belong to the nineteenth century as easily as to the ancient world:

The sapient legislators affected to believe, that the popular clamour for the restoration of political rights was excited by the arts of popular writers, while they had before their eyes a full and sufficient refutation of such strange doctrine; for they had in their pay an army of ballad-mongers and pamphleteers, better paid than any of those who supported the people; they laboured more strenuously in their vocation, and explained the blessings of misgovernment with a splendid disregard for truth and logic well worthy of their cause: but the people disregarded and laughed at their productions.⁵⁴

Few, indeed, could miss the anxiety which underpinned such appropriations of the classics to buttress established authority:

We've lectures long
By the Peers, on "Art and Song," –
Pointing all the moral strong –
"Class array'd,
'Gainst its ruling class, is wrong" –
*Who's afraid?*⁵⁵

'There's no excuse for ignorance,' as Robert Brough remarked, 'now Baronets and Earls / Have taken, from the lecture-room, to pelting us with pearls.'⁵⁶ Brough had a great deal of fun at the expense of these gentlemen, and their remorseless seriousness.⁵⁷

Not all classical attacks on reform were earnest lectures, though: some were subtle and satirical. Charles Bradlaugh, for instance, was one of the nineteenth century's most celebrated campaigners for political reform. As Royle puts it, he 'was the popular hero – the champion of the masses against the classes, of right against might'⁵⁸ – an impassioned critic of the power of the aristocracy and of the Church of England.⁵⁹ In 1871, Bradlaugh was portrayed as a modern-day Nero, on account of his religious skepticism, and connections with the Freethought movement. A mock history of the Freethinkers was published, in the form of a company prospectus: *"Non Credo." A Prospectus of the Ancient and Modern Firm of Nero, Julian, Bradawl [Bradlaugh], and Company (Limited):*

This Company was founded in the year A.D. 64, for the purpose of exterminating Christianity. In order, however, to keep pace with human development, its basis has from time to time been widened, and now it aims at nothing less than emancipating the human race from the slavery of all religious beliefs. Its registered Trade Mark is “*Non Credo*.”⁶⁰

Bradlaugh and the contemporary Freethinkers, in their opposition to Anglican Christianity, were the heirs of none other than Nero himself. Set within this frame, the movement’s successes invite ridicule, its pretensions, deflation⁶¹ – and the ancient world smears a vocal critic of the contemporary establishment.

The classics, in other words were a weapon – to be deployed opportunistically. They were used as a boundary fence, to defend entrenched positions of privilege and close the doors of politics and culture on aspirants. Writers from undistinguished backgrounds were frequently ridiculed for their ‘ignorance’ of the ancient world – and implicit unworthiness to participate in literary culture. As Edmund Yates put it:

The gentlemen who just about this time [1855] were establishing a new school of critical literature were constantly either savagely ferocious or bitterly sarcastic with professional literary men [...] who in most cases had not the advantage of that university education in which their detractors gloried, and which enabled them to turn the *Ode to Thaliarchus* into halting English verse, or to imbue with a few classical allusions their fierce political essay or flippant critical review.⁶²

As a writer for *The Idler* sneered, of the magazine’s lower-class competitors: ‘Their writings prove their creed, / That men who write should never read.’⁶³ These were ‘fellows who, if you once get in their pillory, will pelt you with Greek roots, like so many cabbage-stumps.’⁶⁴ It is debatable, though, how often such classical ‘pelting’ stung. Those on the receiving end were likely to ridicule it:

“You are no gentleman, Blugg. I diverge, parenthetically, into this outburst of good breeding to prove to you that I am one myself. The Mediterranean! Washing the shores of Carthage, where old Hannibal lived when he was at home. [...] And of Naples: which my

plebeian acquaintance, Higg, will be astonished to learn, for the first time, (never mind, Higg, old boy – it's never too late to learn – stick to your Mechanics' Institute, and there is no knowing what may happen,) was known to the ancients by the high sounding name of Neapolis. Glorious old Neapolis!"⁶⁵

(After this 'outburst of good breeding', similar to Mr St. Lempriere's, it transpires that the speaker is no more distinguished than poor Blugg and Higg – having grown up 'in the Glasgow poorhouse.'⁶⁶ Antiquity, once again, has a defensive role in the performance of social boundaries.)

It is undeniable that the ancient world played a key role in articulating and justifying resistance to political change throughout this period – but such appropriations of antiquity were scorned as frequently as they struck home. Despite the efforts of many, the classics did not function as an impregnable barrier around elite politics and culture.

LOOKING UP

For members of the working classes, the ancient world offered 'the thrill of life-changing imaginative discovery,'⁶⁷ as Hall and Rose have noted; it could be a fresh and astonishing landscape. Rose has written vividly of how transformative, for some, an encounter with the classics could be. There was Alfred Williams who, 'while working in the great railway factory at Swindon [...] taught himself enough Greek and Latin to translate Ovid, Pindar, Sappho, Plato, Menander and Horace. He mastered the Greek alphabet by chalking it up on machinery, and faced down a resentful supervisor who tried to make him erase it.'⁶⁸ There was William Latto, 'an archetypal autodidact: a Chartist weaver who read from books propped against his handloom, and learned Latin from a Free Kirk minister.'⁶⁹ And there was George Haw, who wrote of his journey from 'Workhouse to Westminster' – and remembered the sharp surprise and wonder of antiquity rushing into his life:

What a revelation it was to me! Pictures of romance and beauty I had never dreamed of suddenly opened up before my eyes. I was transported from the East End to an enchanted

land. It was a rare luxury for a working lad like me just home from work to find myself suddenly among the heroes and nymphs of ancient Greece.⁷⁰

Few working-class encounters with the classics, though, caused as great a stir as Ann Yearsley's. The 'milkwoman of Bristol,' she was born Ann Cromartie in 1753, and grew up in a working-class family – marrying John Yearsley in 1774. In 1785, she published her first volume of poetry – *Poems, on Several Occasions*⁷¹ – with the assistance of the well-connected Hannah More. 'An evangelical author, More favored teaching the poor to read, but only to indoctrinate them in Christian morality and obedience.'⁷² Yearsley's poems were quite simply a sensation. The list of aristocratic subscribers at the front of the volume runs for almost thirty pages – beginning at A with 'Her Grace the Duchess Dowager of Athol',⁷³ passing through G with 'Marchioness Grey',⁷⁴ M with 'His Grace the Duke of Montagu',⁷⁵ P with 'Her Grace the Duchess Dowager of Portland' and 'His Grace the Lord Primate of Ireland',⁷⁶ and ending up at last with W and the 'Countess Dowager of Westmoreland'.⁷⁷

This Bristolian 'milkwoman' wrote with a virtuoso command of the classical canon which would have been the envy of many an aristocrat. Ancient deities and myths jostle on her pages. 'Deucalion' floats past 'Mantuan groves', 'Phoebus' nods to 'Niobe'.⁷⁸ As More wrote to a friend: 'Confess, dear Madam, that you and I know many a head completely stored with Greek and Latin which cou'd not have produced better Verses.'⁷⁹ In *Poems, on Several Occasions*, the British elite celebrate Yearsley, their charming new 'find'. That is the tension at the heart of the volume: it cannot escape its patrons. Once readers emerge from that improbably long list of aristocratic subscribers, they will find that many of Yearsley's poems are also dedicated to members of the aristocracy.⁸⁰ Sat between the list of aristocrats and the poems in honour of aristocrats is More's preface, which makes the role of Yearsley in this enterprise very clear. She is to be defined through her 'gratitude' – and is presented to her readers as someone who cannot even be trusted to manage the profits from her own work:

The Editor of these Poems [More] desires to acknowledge, with the warmest gratitude, the kindness of those Friends, whose generosity and successful zeal have enabled her [...] to

raise a very handsome Sum of Money for the Author, which is placed in the Public Funds, vested in Trustees hands, for the benefit of her Family.⁸¹

The poor poetess was to remain (relatively) poor. More was adamant: 'I am *utterly* against taking her out of her station.'⁸² 'What these patrons were after,' as Waldron observes, 'was a living manifestation of one of the century's great illusions – that if country life in ancient times was as pure and simple as certain classics familiar to them from childhood implied, then it must be so still, and that to be poor and rural was to be in the best condition for poetry.'⁸³ No-one appears to have asked Yearsley what she thought about all this. When she realized that in spite of her success, she was supposed to remain the 'simple' grateful milkwoman, she was furious.⁸⁴ But what galled her in particular seems to have been the dismissal of her knowledge of the classics.

This knowledge was treated as a curiosity – a party-trick, really – by many of her readers. Sober Christian morality, many thought, would be a more fitting foundation for her verse than pagan flights of fancy. 'In Pagan times one could have supposed Apollo had fallen in love with her rosy cheek, snatched her to the top of Mount Parnassus [...] but, as this heathen fiction will not pass now, let us consider whether Christian faith may not serve better.'⁸⁵ For Yearsley, however, antiquity was an integral part of her self, and her poetic identity. She spoke 'with poetic rapture of a translation of the *Georgics*, which she had read with peculiar delight'⁸⁶ – and devoured any ancient works she could get hold of. In 1787, after yet another contemptuous dismissal, she set out her claim on the classical past in a remarkable poem published in the *Edinburgh Magazine*. *Addressed to Ignorance; Occasioned by a Gentleman's desiring the Author never to assume a Knowledge of the Ancients* is a dazzling performance. It uses the Pythagorean doctrine of reincarnation to imagine the great men and women of the ancient world reincarnated in eighteenth-century Britain. Without exception, they are all leading drab, embittered lives, amongst the lowest classes of society:

I am blind to the Ancients - yet Fancy would prove,
That Pythagoras lives thro' each age. [...]
Zeno, Tibullus, and Socrates grave,
In bodies of wan Garreteers,

All tatter'd, cold, hungry, by turns sigh and rave
At their Publisher's bill of arrears.
Diogenes lives in an ambling old Beau;
Plato's spirit is damp'd in yon fool;
While the soul of Lycurgus to Tyburn must go,
In yon Thief that is hang'd by his rule. [...]
Penelope lends to five lovers an ear,
Walking on with one sleeve to her gown.
But Helen, the Spartan, stands near Charing-Cross,
Long laces and pins doom'd to cry.⁸⁷

Picaresque and packed with classical details, these lines are defiantly ascribed to 'Ann Yearsley, Milkwoman of Bristol.' 'I am blind to the Ancients,' the narrator observes – before showing the reader that she is anything but. The poem, indeed, demonstrates that she cannot be excluded from contemporary claims upon 'the Ancients'. Not only that, but no-one can be excluded from such claims: not the thief 'Lycurgus', swinging from the gallows at Tyburn, not the miserable writers in their garret, not the girl selling lace outside Charing Cross – and not the milkwoman of Bristol. The ancient world belongs to them as surely as it does to Yearsley's thirty pages of patrons:

Here's Trojan, Athenian, Greek, Frenchman and I,
Heav'n knows what I was long ago;
No matter, thus shielded, this age I defy,
And the next cannot wound me, I know.⁸⁸

'Yearsley's levelling message,' as Rose puts it, 'is uncompromising: this is my culture as well.'⁸⁹ Not content to be an anomaly, she used her verse to claim that the working classes had a cultural authority – and a claim on the past – at least as strong as that of their 'betters'.

Claiming classics for the disadvantaged was one thing – but translating that claim into tangible benefits was, as many discovered, something else altogether. Great hopes were built upon the

ancient past by the marginalized, during this period. Classical knowledge was depicted as ‘the silver key,’⁹⁰ to the world of the elite. Those who acquired it were told that they would thereby gain access to every kind of success. A lecture by the Rev James Pycroft argued that ‘knowledge attained under the classical-school system is more eligible in a near, immediate, and direct point of view, for success in commerce, advancement in life, and the honourable acquisition of wealth.’⁹¹

This, however, was a notion which writers were more interested in interrogating than embracing. In Dickens’ *David Copperfield*, Uriah Heep wriggles with pantomime humility, when telling David how he would never presume to learn Latin – or to pursue a life above his ‘umble’ station:

“There are expressions, you see, Master Copperfield—Latin words and terms—in Mr. Tidd, that are trying to a reader of my umble attainments.”

“Would you like to be taught Latin?” I said briskly. “I will teach it you with pleasure, as I learn it.”

“Oh, thank you, Master Copperfield,” he answered, shaking his head. “I am sure it's very kind of you to make the offer, but I am much too umble to accept it.”

“What nonsense, Uriah!”

“Oh, indeed you must excuse me, Master Copperfield! I am greatly obliged, and I should like it of all things, I assure you; but I am far too umble. There are people enough to tread upon me in my lowly state, without my doing outrage to their feelings by possessing learning. Learning ain’t for me. A person like myself had better not aspire. If he is to get on in life, he must get on umbly, Master Copperfield!”

I never saw his mouth so wide, or the creases in his cheeks so deep, as when he delivered himself of these sentiments: shaking his head all the time, and writhing modestly.⁹²

But, of course, ‘the avaricious, false, and grasping—HEEP’⁹³ was fairly bursting with ambition. His performance of humility was entirely insincere. As Thiele puts it, ‘Uriah is a manifestation

of condescending and even downright hostile suspicions directed toward the lower middle class by a Victorian bourgeoisie which, like David, wanted distance from its closest social inferiors.⁹⁴ Throughout the novel, he functions as ‘a dark double of the narrator’⁹⁵ – and his crafty rise through society (without the benefit of Latin) uncomfortably mirrors David’s own. Uriah finds that he does not need Latin to get the better of his ‘betters’: ‘I’ve umbled some of ‘em for a pretty long time back, umble as I was!’⁹⁶

Uriah, as it turns out, was right to scorn the promises of social advancement embodied by David and his Latin grammar. Classical knowledge, as I explore elsewhere,⁹⁷ simply did not enable its lower-class holders – barring a very few exceptions – to transcend class boundaries, and mingle with the elite. Embittered schoolmasters, frustrated social-climbers, and poverty-stricken scholars found this out to their cost.⁹⁸ The most famous story of such disappointment, of course, is that of Hardy’s Jude Fawley, *Jude the Obscure*. Jude hoped to vault into the upper classes – all the way, indeed, into the House of Lords – through his command of the classics:

“I have acquired quite an average student’s power to read the common ancient classics, Latin in particular.” This was true, Jude possessing a facility in that language which enabled him with great ease to himself to beguile his lonely walks by imaginary conversations therein. [...]

“I’ll be D.D. before I have done!”

And then he continued to dream, and thought he might become even a bishop by leading a pure, energetic, wise, Christian life. And what an example he would set!⁹⁹

Not only did Jude never gain his bishop’s mitre, he never gained a shred of recognition as a legitimate classical scholar, in spite of his abilities. After dispatching letters to the heads of all the Colleges of Oxford (Christminster, in Hardy), he received only one reply. ‘I have read your letter with interest,’ it ran, ‘and, judging from your description of yourself as a working-man, I venture to think that you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your trade than by adopting any other course. That, therefore, is what I advise you to do.’¹⁰⁰ The classics have rigidly policed boundaries, in Hardy – and claims upon

them are determined not by ability (many of the undergraduates who scorn Jude are entirely ignorant),¹⁰¹ but by social class. Classical knowledge and the working classes were not permitted to coexist comfortably.

Working-class scholars often received little recognition of – and less respect for – their abilities, from Britain's elite. But sometimes, gaining respect from their 'betters' was not the point. Jude may have longed for acceptance from the establishment, but many did not. Thoughts of reform – at times, of revolution – drew many marginal figures to the ancient world. The classics were repeatedly enlisted not to claim the privileges of the upper classes, but to sweep those privileges away – and redraw British society along very different lines.

RADICAL CLASSICS

The period encompassed by this volume was one of immense social and political turmoil; between 1780 and 1880, Britain changed almost beyond recognition. Many of the most significant reforms – and reform-movements – drew heavily upon the ancient world: looking back to antiquity became a way to argue passionately for contemporary change. And time and again, the classics found a place at the heart of radical politics.

Some of the most significant lower-class voices in nineteenth-century politics came, of course, from the Chartist movement. The Chartists demanded votes for all men, a secret ballot, annual elections, and other measures designed to curb the power of the aristocracy. Always a competitive collection of voices rather than a secure hierarchy, 'the Chartist movement,' as Wright notes, 'did not follow a pattern of unilinear growth, but rather rose to a clear peak on three occasions; 1839-40, 1842 and 1848, each involving a mass petition to parliament.'¹⁰²

Chartists listened to the speeches of their 'betters', heavy with the classics. For some, the idea that classical knowledge had any bearing on the practical business of present-day governance was simply absurd:

One may be able to read a Latin or Greek author with ease, perhaps even to write verses in these languages [...] and yet know little of political economy. While, on the other hand, we

have met with untutored mechanics – men who make no pretensions to learning – whose views on political topics were clearer, and their sentiments more just, than are those of nine-tenths of the right honourables who sign M.P. after their name.¹⁰³

Mastery of the classics, here, was exactly the wrong kind of mastery: it was the education of oppressors. ‘The rich are indeed brained at college, and learn to smatter Greek and Latin [...] to tyrannize over the people; to rob, oppress, and impoverish a groaning nation.’¹⁰⁴

Many Chartists, however, took a rather different approach to the classical past – seeking not to dismiss it, but to put it to work. The history of the ancient world was re-written in support of the movement’s political goals. Here, the key narrative was of downfall – and of the downfall of Rome. Its transition from republic to empire was fatal. ‘The robe of an Emperor became the winding-sheet of Rome: she, like the Assyrian, the Persian, and the Macedonian empires, passed away, and left no epitaph behind save one, which was this: “The stern virtue of her republic was the beginning of her rise, and the basis of her eternal glory; but the licentious robbery of her Emperors was the first signal of her ruin, and of her eventual overthrow.” Monarchy is the nurse of luxury, the executioner of states.’¹⁰⁵ Time and again, it was argued that ‘when Rome was a republic, its grandeur increased daily; but the establishment of the empire sowed the seeds of dissolution.’¹⁰⁶

Within Chartist rhetoric, however, the ancient world also had a strongly positive role. Greece and Rome were portrayed as idealized republics, states where, for a time, power was not concentrated in the hands of the few:

Each man felt himself to be a part of his country. [...] So long as Rome respected the privileges of her subjects, so long was she powerful; but when she lost her public virtue, when a profligate and vicious aristocracy began to ride rough-shod over the liberties of the people, then the great body of the people began to be indifferent to the welfare of the state.¹⁰⁷

Not all Chartists saw such rosy potential in antiquity – and many discussed in detail the fundamental differences between ancient and contemporary political systems.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless,

the classics became a frequent source of hope and inspiration to the movement, as its campaigns gathered pace. For some, there was no tradition more classical than the struggle for liberty:

The great spirits of the world have raised their voices and cried “Liberty!” [...] Homer and Demosthenes in Greece, Cicero in Rome [...] have echoed through the universe, liberty! and that cry has been continued, and will not cease to be heard till tyranny is no more.¹⁰⁹

Throughout the nineteenth century, the ancient world could be found at the heart of radical political discourse. Few did more to advance the notion that the classics were inherently radical, the natural possession not of the elite, but of those opposed to the status quo, than ‘Publicola’ of the *London Dispatch*. First published in the influential *Dispatch* around 1830, ‘the weekly article signed ‘Publicola’ [...] was famous for its scathing denunciation of political, legal, and social abuses.’¹¹⁰ Publius Valerius Publicola, for whom it was named, played a key role in the establishment of the Roman Republic – and was a hero for republicans, at the time. The *Dispatch*’s first Publicola was David Edward Williams ‘a violent and coarse but very vigorous and popular writer. He wrote weekly for about sixteen or seventeen years, and after his death [in 1846] the signature was assumed by Mr. Fox [William Johnson Fox], the famous orator and member for Oldham.’¹¹¹ Publicola’s columns were rarely less than incendiary – one was titled, with relish, ‘The Last Hours of the Peerage’¹¹² – and were ‘read all over the country’¹¹³ by the elite and the working classes alike.¹¹⁴

In the theatre, too, radical classics found a home, as Sachs has noted.¹¹⁵ Certain figures from the ancient world were especially favoured. Spartacus – the gladiator who led a rebellion against the power of Rome – was beloved by those who had the British aristocracy in their sights. As Vance has discussed,¹¹⁶ in Jacob Jones’ *Spartacus; or, The Roman Gladiator*, the political agenda hits hard. Here, Spartacus is ‘the great avenger of the Captive’s lot’¹¹⁷ – and is set against the grim slave-owning ‘miser’¹¹⁸ Batiatus and the ‘vain Monopolist’¹¹⁹ Marcus Crassus, ‘the Rich Man, who hath made some thousands poor.’¹²⁰ Crassus is a straightforwardly repugnant capitalist,¹²¹ while Spartacus and his gladiators are straightforward heroes, ‘free men, who have struggled till they’re free’.¹²² *Spartacus* is a play about class-conflict – and Jones makes it clear where the audience’s sympathies should lie. When a captured gladiator is brought before the Consuls of

Rome, he spits defiance at them and ‘your man-enslaving, your man-slaying Rome.’ In Jones’ stage-direction, ‘*the Consuls shrink back at his undaunted gaze*’.¹²³

The classics were never just a buttress for elite privilege. The ancient world played a wide-ranging role in radical politics – and competing engagements with it underpinned some of the time’s most significant political debates.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, leveraging the power of the ancient world to effect real change in the present day remained as difficult for the lower classes as it did for Britain’s elite. The more ambitious the claim upon the past, the more fragile it was within discourse. And the ambition was grand indeed, when Robert Brough turned to the ancient world.

WYNCH STREET

It was, ironically, Chartists who ensured that Brough never received a classical education. He grew up in Wales, where his father ran a brewery; around the time Robert was thirteen, it went bankrupt. Brough’s father had been forced to give evidence against some local Chartists. Every other local Chartist – and there were many – shortly afterwards developed a distaste for ‘Brough’s Beer.’ After a ‘plain English education,’¹²⁵ Robert was soon sent out to earn himself a living. He ‘had neither Latin nor Greek. [...] As from the age of fifteen or sixteen he had to earn his livelihood by the labour of his own hands and brain, the most he could do was add to his stock of knowledge such adjuncts as he deemed most valuable for his working career.’¹²⁶

After some success in Liverpool with *The Enchanted Isle*, a burlesque of *The Tempest*, Brough moved to London with his brother William. There, he quickly made a name for himself in the theatrical world. Respectability, though, was not his goal. Instead, ‘sallow and sickly... and wholly careless of his personal appearance’, he was a perpetual concern to his more prudent friends, including William (‘clean Brough,’ as he became known, in contrast to Robert, ‘clever Brough’).¹²⁷ He may have felt little affinity with the workaday world, but he felt none at all with the upper classes. In the midst of his abundant good nature, that focused loathing was shocking:

There is a word in the English tongue
Where I’d rather it were not [...]

‘T is a tawdry cloak for a dirty soul [...]
‘T is a curse to the land – deny it who can?
That self-same boast, “I’m a gentleman.”¹²⁸

In a preface to his *Songs of the ‘Governing Classes’*, Brough made the point more sharply still: ‘The feeling of which the following ballads are the faintest echo and imperfect expression is a deeply-rooted belief that to the institution of aristocracy in this country (not merely to its “undue preponderance,” but to its absolute existence) is mainly attributable all the political injustice [...] we have come to deplore.’¹²⁹ It need hardly be said that Brough wore his political heart on his sleeve. ‘I believe in the Revolution’,¹³⁰ he told his readers, simply. His friends were rather alarmed. All this ‘bitter savagery’¹³¹ was, as one put it, ‘dangerous.’¹³²

Again and again, seeking to realize his grand political ambitions, Brough reaches for the ancient world; *Songs of the ‘Governing Classes’* was saturated with the past. A succession of tawdry aristocrats creep across the pages, in unflattering classical garb. Sir Menenius Agrippa is a hypocritical blend of Shakespeare’s Roman patrician (from *Coriolanus*), and a present day ‘popular’ politician: ‘He sits for a borough remote from his home / (Where he reigns like a slave-girt Patrician of Rome). / He goes on the hustings in very old coats / (He’s a change at the club) when soliciting votes.’¹³³ Nero puts in an appearance, trying (and failing) to prove that ‘some good in all the great must be.’¹³⁴ And always, recurring on page after page, comes the ‘lazy heartless stare’¹³⁵ of the ‘fine English gentleman.’

Brough’s was a disreputable classicism, which arrived in the present through voices from the margins. He set 1850s Britain within a frame of aristocratic abuses and (consequent) popular insurrections dating back to antiquity – using *Coriolanus*’ unceremonious eviction by the Roman people to stir up some contemporary mobs to storm some stately homes:

“Coriolanus snubs the People [...]
Taxes are doubled, and armies perish;
Slavery spreads.” “He’s your chosen man.”
“Yes, but suppose we chose the wrong one?”
“It can’t be help’d!” Said the mob, “It can.”

Soon, by the force of wrath and brickbats
Urged from Rome, the Consul flees
This is the story of Coriolanus –
You may apply it how you please.¹³⁶

Brough's Coriolanus, responsible for armies being wiped out, came forth in the midst of Britain's unhappy entanglement in the Crimean War – a conflict notable less for its triumphs than for the horrible conditions which soldiers had to endure. 'The wretched beggar who wandered about the streets of London in the rain led the life of a prince compared with the British soldiers.'¹³⁷ Brough loathed the war – calling it 'that absurd struggle, in which so much was lost, and so little won.'¹³⁸ He has the British army's aristocratic commanders in his sights, here – and uses the ancient world not to point out their heroic forebears, but to suggest that the proper way of dealing with them is to drive them out of the land in a hail of 'brickbats.' 'You may apply it how you please.'

In July 1856, Brough's extraordinary *Medea* opened at the Olympic Theatre – to triumph, packed houses, and glowing reviews. As played by Robson, this was 'the Medea of vulgar life'¹³⁹ – a heroine from the lower classes. Her first entrance was as a beggar, and her first words were an appeal for money. Even her furniture, she complained, had been repossessed: 'A landlord, as inclement as the weather, / Has seiz'd our flock bed'.¹⁴⁰ Her former husband Jason, by contrast – who fairly oozed onto the stage of the Olympic – was an upwardly-mobile 'aspiring reptile',¹⁴¹ determined to improve his position in the world by marrying into the royal family. And he cheerfully proclaimed himself to be the villain of the piece – boasting of his abandonment of his wife, and daring the audience to boo: 'I was to blame and that's the truth, / I'm not ashamed to own it.'¹⁴²

Brough's ancient world spoke up for the poor, instead of reinforcing the privileges of the comfortable. His Medea is a woman rendered destitute by her husband's desertion of her. Married women, at the time, had no independent property of their own – so had no legal redress in the event of abandonment. Lord Lyndhurst, when proposing the introduction of the Married

Women's Property Bill (he tried in 1856 and 1857, but it was voted down on both occasions), argued that, as soon as she was separated from her husband, a wife was 'homeless, helpless, and almost wholly destitute of civil rights.'¹⁴³ Brough's *Medea*, forgotten by her husband and reduced to begging at the workhouse gates, is, as Macintosh remarks elsewhere in this volume, 'deeply political.'¹⁴⁴

Yet the reception of Brough's radical classics was problematic, at best. When the 'governing classes' jostled in the mud of Wynch Street to see Brough's burlesque and Robson's triumph, they cheered the great actor. They did not see within *Medea* the shape of a different world – or a political message. Brough could not dash onto the stage when his politics got lost in laughter, and 'gravely observe,' like Robson, "'This is not a comic song.'" *Medea* was an undisputed triumph – but as a burlesque, not a piece of political theatre; many of the reviews called it Robson's success alone, one carried off in spite of his script. For the *Illustrated London News*, 'it was Mr. Robson, not the burlesque-writer, who triumphed.'¹⁴⁵

However determinedly Brough tried to rabble-rouse, he found that few were inclined to listen. His most overtly political works, particularly those *Songs of the 'Governing Classes'*, had 'scarcely any sale.'¹⁴⁶ A theatre manager might try a Brough burlesque after he 'had tried in succession elephants, jugglers, "real water," and cavalry spectacles, but had reaped little by such experiments beyond harvests of abuse in the newspapers',¹⁴⁷ finance, not revolutionary politics, determined the visibility and viability of Brough's work. And he was rarely taken seriously – despite his best efforts. In 1859, he gave a reading at the Marylebone Institution – and 'his address to the audience was not, as might have been expected, comic, but serious.'¹⁴⁸ He read extracts from his poetry, and from *Medea* – and was very well received. By then, however, Brough's health was so poor that he was not able to capitalize on the attention. Making the ancient world stand for something – and play a radical part in contemporary debates over social class – proved for him to be an ideal forever out of reach.

Brough's works were frequently revived during the 1850s and 1860s,¹⁴⁹ and other burlesque-writers borrowed from their troubled politics and linguistic playfulness. When Robson took over management of the Olympic Theatre in 1857, he frequently revived *Medea* – playing the heroine

to wondrous effect, as ever.¹⁵⁰ But Brough's political ambitions faded from the stage: in a rehearsal copy of *Medea*, dating from Robson's period as manager of the Olympic,¹⁵¹ much of the radical edge is edited out of the script. The bitter fury of the abandoned wife fades away¹⁵² – Medea, in fact, has no longer been abandoned by her husband. Jason's song about his desertion of Medea is drastically shortened¹⁵³ – with the lines which make him most culpable excised (Figure 3).

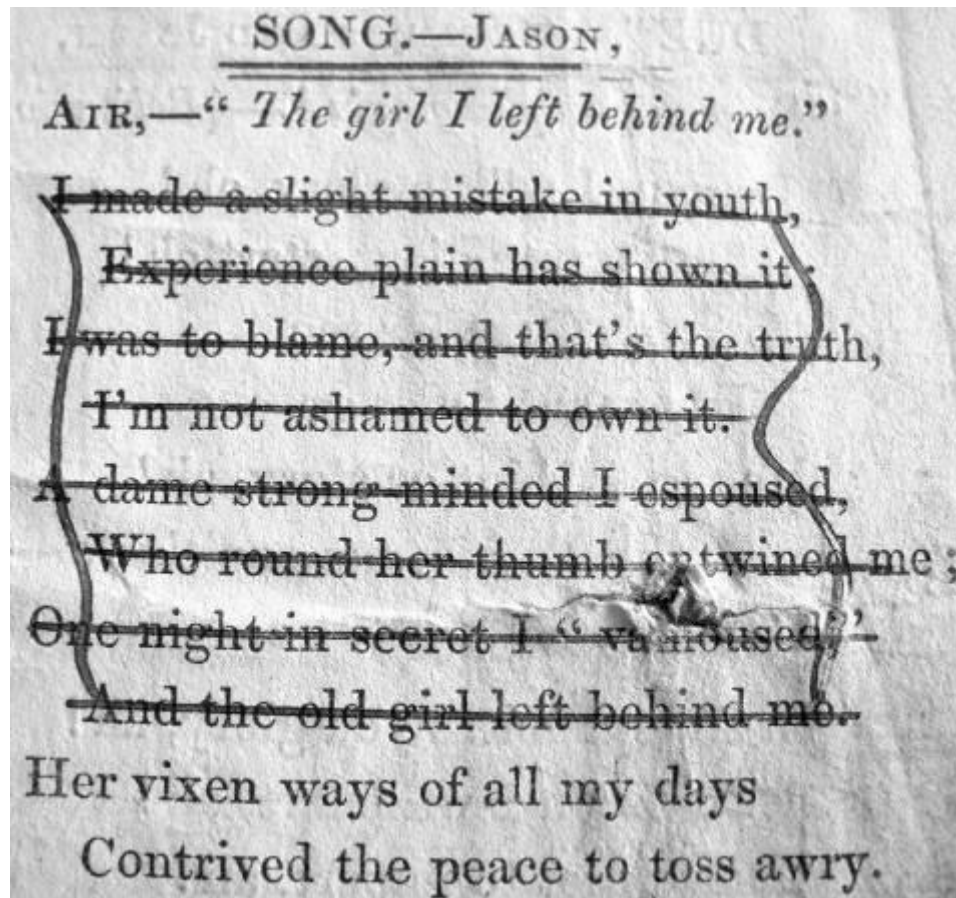


Figure 3: Once-radical classics: Cuts made to Robert Brough's *Medea*, in a later production of the burlesque.¹⁵⁴

'My plot destroyed,' as Medea herself put it.¹⁵⁵ There would be no revolution. Brough's health had been weak for years¹⁵⁶; 'indeed, for a long period, those nearest and dearest to him had known that the most that could be done for him was to soothe and cherish him to the end.'¹⁵⁷ He died very young, at 32, in 1860, amidst a flurry of unrealized ambitions.¹⁵⁸ But the hopes he invested in the ancient world were almost boundless. He summoned the past not to glorify the

elite, but rather those cast off by contemporary society. For them, he claimed the classics, as their rightful possession.

The truth is that, despite passionate claims and counter-claims, the ancient world never ‘belonged’ to – and was never controlled by – any one class or social group. The lines between high and low, insider and outsider, were always porous. Aristocrats, working-class scholars, radicals and social-climbers were enmeshed in the same discourse. Brough’s *Medea* – a call to revolution performed to the elite in a stinking back-street – exemplifies this: what social class should we say that it ‘belonged’ to? The relationship between classics and class was tangled and subtle, not to mention unpredictable. There was a touch of the Protean in the ancient world; it was almost impossible to catch hold of and harness to a political agenda. Something would slip, there would be a counter-claim, there would be an inconvenient giggle from the back of the room. Deploying antiquity within political discourse was an inherently precarious business – rather like pointing an antique gun at one’s opponents: it might do as it was supposed to, or it might blow up in one’s face. Frustration was never far away, when classics collided with politics and class – but nor was boundless hope.

¹ I am grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for their generous support of my work – and to the participants in the ‘Classics and Class’ conference, organized by Edith Hall in July 2010, where I presented an earlier version of this piece.

² George Augustus Sala, *Robson: A Sketch* (London, 1864), p.29.

³ *ibid.*, pp.31-2.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp.29-30.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.30.

⁶ Robert Brough, *Medea; or The Best of Mothers with a Brute of a Husband* (London, 1856).

⁷ Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660-1914* (Oxford, 2005).

⁸ *The Times*, 15 July 1856, p.12.

⁹ Brough, *Medea*, p.11

¹⁰ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences* (London, 1885), p.215.

¹¹ Robert Brough, *Songs of the ‘Governing Classes’* (London, 1855), p.110.

¹² cf. Edmund Richardson, ‘A Conjugal Lesson: Robert Brough’s *Medea* and the discourses of mid-Victorian Britain,’ *Ramus*, 32:1 (2003), 57-83.

¹³ Sala, *Robson*, p.45.

¹⁴ Edith Hall, ‘Putting the Class into Classical Reception’, in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, eds. Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp.386-397

¹⁵ The audience at the Olympic Theatre was, of course, far from being exclusively upper-class – and was often raucously diverse – but Britain’s elite evidently made up a striking proportion of it.

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- ¹⁶ Following Hall, I would argue that 'it is not enough to identify the class position of people reacting to the ancient Greek and Roman world in subsequent epochs: class agenda is even more important.' (ibid., p.393).
- ¹⁷ Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.74.
- ¹⁸ *The Times*, 11 October 1859, p.5.
- ¹⁹ David Skilton, 'Schoolboy Latin and the Mid-Victorian Novelist', *Browning Institute Studies* 16 (1988), pp.39-55.
- ²⁰ Andrew Amos, *Four lectures on The Advantages of a Classical Education as an auxiliary to a Commercial Education* (London, 1845), p.4.
- ²¹ Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p.44.
- ²² Amos, *Lectures*, p.15.
- ²³ George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (London, 1859), Book I, Chapter XVI.
- ²⁴ *Punch*, 15 May 1858, p.200. Cornwall Lewis' quotation is from Horace, *Ars Poetica* 28: 'Too cautious, fearing the blast, he crawls on the ground' (trans. Kline). Disraeli's answering line is *Ars Poetica* 230: 'Scorning the ground, grasping at air and clouds' (trans. Kline). The debate itself is in *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Volume 149, May 3, 1858, pp. 2152-3. Disraeli remarked: 'After listening to the observations of the right hon. Gentleman, I think I may venture to answer him by a line from the same poet to whom he has referred' – and then quoted his Latin.
- ²⁵ cf. Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p.66.
- ²⁶ David Wiesen, 'Juvenal, Ovid, and the Earl of Chatham', *The Classical World*, 71:6 (1978), pp. 385-387.
- ²⁷ cf. C. A. Vince, 'Latin Poets in the British Parliament', *The Classical Review*, 46:3 (1932), pp. 97-104.
- ²⁸ Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 62.
- ²⁹ Vince, *Latin*, p.97.
- ³⁰ Robert Blake, *Disraeli* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), p.17.
- ³¹ cf. Jonathan Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity* (Oxford, 2010), p.27, Jenkyns, *Victorians*, p.62.
- ³² *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 7 March 1832.
- ³³ cf. Norman Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp.38-9.
- ³⁴ cf. *Punch*, 17 February 1855, p.73.
- ³⁵ *Punch*, 2 January 1858, pp.1-2.
- ³⁶ Robert Brough and Edmund Yates, *Our Miscellany* (London, 1856), p.77.
- ³⁷ cf. *The Times*, 14 October 1856, p.9.
- ³⁸ cf. Brough and Yates, *Miscellany*, p.77.
- ³⁹ Angus Reach, *The Natural History of Humbugs* (London, 1847), p.32.
- ⁴⁰ ibid.
- ⁴¹ ibid.
- ⁴² ibid., p.33.
- ⁴³ cf. David Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone* (Oxford, 2004).
- ⁴⁴ George Eliot, *The Mill On The Floss* (London, 1860), Book III, Chapter V.
- ⁴⁵ Anon (pseud. Scriblerus Redivivus), *The Art of Pluck* (Oxford, 1874), p.29.
- ⁴⁶ Edward Whitty, *The Governing Classes of Great Britain* (London, 1859), p.181.
- ⁴⁷ ibid., p.122.
- ⁴⁸ cf. *Punch*, 3 February 1872, p.43.
- ⁴⁹ Amos, *Lectures*, p.4.
- ⁵⁰ *The Standard* (London), 12 October 1829, p.2.
- ⁵¹ Hugh Seymour Tremenheere, *The political experience of the ancients* (London, 1852), p.vii.
- ⁵² ibid., p.viii.
- ⁵³ ibid., p.v.
- ⁵⁴ *The Athenaeum*, 1831, p.666.
- ⁵⁵ Brough, *Songs*, p.102 (original emphasis).
- ⁵⁶ ibid., p.52.
- ⁵⁷ cf. ibid., pp.31-2.
- ⁵⁸ Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), p.29.
- ⁵⁹ cf. ibid., p.31.

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- ⁶⁰ Anon, "Non Credo." *A Prospectus of the Ancient and Modern Firm of Nero, Julian, Bradawl, and Company (Limited)* (London, 1871), p.3.
- ⁶¹ cf. *ibid.*, p.9.
- ⁶² Brough, *Songs*, p.v (preface by Edmund Yates).
- ⁶³ *The Idler*, quoted in Yates, *Recollections*, p.306.
- ⁶⁴ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ Brough and Yates, *Miscellany*, pp.72-3.
- ⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.74.
- ⁶⁷ Hall, *Class*, p.391.
- ⁶⁸ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2001), p.141.
- ⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.61.
- ⁷⁰ Quoted in George Haw, *From workhouse to Westminster* (London: Cassell, 1907), p.22.
- ⁷¹ Ann Yearsley, *Poems, on Several Occasions* (London, 1785).
- ⁷² Rose, *Intellectual Life*, p.19.
- ⁷³ Yearsley, *Poems*, p.xv.
- ⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.xxvi.
- ⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.xxxiii.
- ⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.xxxvi.
- ⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.xliii
- ⁷⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 77, 78, 48, 28.
- ⁷⁹ Hannah More to Elizabeth Montagu, quoted in Mary Waldron, *Lactilla, Milkwoman of Clifton: The Life and Writings of Ann Yearsley, 1753-1806* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), p.52.
- ⁸⁰ cf. Yearsley, *Poems*, pp.66, 74.
- ⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.liii.
- ⁸² Hannah More to Elizabeth Montagu, quoted in Waldron, *Lactilla*, p.52 (original emphasis).
- ⁸³ *ibid.*, p.33.
- ⁸⁴ cf. *ibid.*, p.155.
- ⁸⁵ Elizabeth Montagu to Hannah More, quoted *ibid.*, p.53.
- ⁸⁶ John Evans, *The history of Bristol, civil and ecclesiastical* (Bristol, 1816), vol.2, p.401.
- ⁸⁷ *The Edinburgh Magazine*, 1787, p.414.
- ⁸⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁸⁹ Rose, *Intellectual Life*, p.19.
- ⁹⁰ Amos, *Lectures*, p.6.
- ⁹¹ Rev. James Pycroft, *Four Lectures on the advantages of a Classical Education as an auxiliary to a Commercial Education* (London, 1847), p.60.
- ⁹² Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (London, 1850), Chapter 17.
- ⁹³ *ibid.*, Chapter 52.
- ⁹⁴ David Thiele, 'The "transcendent and immortal... HEEP!": Class Consciousness, Narrative Authority, and the Gothic in David Copperfield', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 42:3 (2000), pp. 201-222.
- ⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.201.
- ⁹⁶ Dickens, *Copperfield*, Chapter 52.
- ⁹⁷ Edmund Richardson, *Classical Victorians: Scholars, Scoundrels and Generals in Pursuit of Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2013).
- ⁹⁸ cf. *The Times*, 18 January 1872, p.6.
- ⁹⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (London, 1895), Book I, Chapter VI.
- ¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, Book II, Chapter VI.
- ¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, Book II, Chapter VII.
- ¹⁰² D. G. Wright, *Popular Radicalism* (London: Longman, 1988), p.116.
- ¹⁰³ *The Chartist Circular*, 20 February 1841, p.1.
- ¹⁰⁴ *The Chartist Circular*, 9 May 1840, p.135.

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- ¹⁰⁵ *The Chartist Circular*, 24 October 1840, p.1.
- ¹⁰⁶ *The Chartist Circular*, 2 May 1840, p.131. cf. also *The Chartist Circular*, 27 June 1840, p.163 (quoting a speech by Thomas Babington Macaulay).
- ¹⁰⁷ *The Chartist Circular*, 20 February 1841, p.1. cf. also Stephen Roberts, *The Chartist Prisoners* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), p.108: '[Thomas] Cooper's talks on Greece and Rome argued that the 'vigour', 'the real & unequalled glory' of these nations derived from their republicanism.'
- ¹⁰⁸ *The Chartist Circular*, 7 November 1840, p.238. This uncertainty over trans-historical parallels was shared by some of the movement's opponents; cf. *The Morning Post*, 27 July 1844, p.4.
- ¹⁰⁹ *The Chartist Circular*, 11 July 1840, p.170.
- ¹¹⁰ *Supplement to the Publishers' Circular*, 6 July 1895, p.4.
- ¹¹¹ Walter Thornbury and Edward Walford, *Old and New London* (London, 1893), vol.1, p.59.
- ¹¹² S. Macoby, *English Radicalism 1832-1852* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935), p.136.
- ¹¹³ George Jacob Holyoake, *Sixty years of an agitator's life* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906), vol.1, p.133.
- ¹¹⁴ cf. *The Odd Fellow*, 20 February 1841.
- ¹¹⁵ Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity*, p.181.
- ¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.46.
- ¹¹⁷ Jacob Jones, *Spartacus; or, The Roman Gladiator* (London, 1837), p.15.
- ¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.9.
- ¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.44.
- ¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.54.
- ¹²¹ cf. *ibid.*, p.44.
- ¹²² *ibid.*, p.22.
- ¹²³ *ibid.*, p.27.
- ¹²⁴ cf. Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1981), p.247.
- ¹²⁵ Yates, *Recollections*, p.213.
- ¹²⁶ Robert Brough, *Marston Lynch* (London, 1860), p.vi (preface by G.A. Sala).
- ¹²⁷ Yates, *Recollections*, p.213.
- ¹²⁸ Brough, *Songs*, p.108.
- ¹²⁹ *ibid.*: 6-7.
- ¹³⁰ *ibid.*: 9.
- ¹³¹ Yates, *Recollections*, p.207.
- ¹³² *ibid.*: 208.
- ¹³³ Brough, *Songs*, p. 32.
- ¹³⁴ *ibid.*, p.64.
- ¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p.112.
- ¹³⁶ *ibid.*, pp.60-2.
- ¹³⁷ W. H. Russell, quoted in Nicholas Bentley (ed.), *Russell's Despatches from the Crimea 1854-1856* (London, Andrew Deutsch, 1966), p.151.
- ¹³⁸ Robert Brough and Charles Bennett, *Shadow and Substance* (London, 1860), p.176.
- ¹³⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 19 July 1856, p.65.
- ¹⁴⁰ Brough, *Medea*, p.11.
- ¹⁴¹ Brough, *Songs*, p.113.
- ¹⁴² Brough, *Medea*, p.9.
- ¹⁴³ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Volume 195, 14 April 1869, p.795.
- ¹⁴⁴ cf. also Hall and Macintosh, *Tragedy*, p.414.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 19 July 1856, p.65.
- ¹⁴⁶ Yates, *Recollections*, p.216. Yates comments that Brough's pamphlet 'has been unprocurable for many years.'
- ¹⁴⁷ Brough and Bennett, *Shadow*, p.109.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Illustrated London News*, 25 June 1859.
- ¹⁴⁹ cf. Hall and Macintosh, *Tragedy*, p.415.

¹⁵⁰ Sala, *Robson*, p.56.

¹⁵¹ Annotated copy of Robert Brough, *Medea; or The Best of Mothers with a Brute of a Husband* (London, 1856), private collection.

¹⁵² cf. the excision of Orpheus' song, *ibid.*, p.17, and *ibid.*, p.16, where Medea's 'Guerra! Guerra!' in the original edition is changed to Orpheus singing 'Spare her! Spare her!'

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, p.9

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Brough, *Medea*, p.34.

¹⁵⁶ cf. Brough, *Marston*, p.vi.

¹⁵⁷ *The Odd-Fellows' Magazine*, October 1860, p.457.

¹⁵⁸ cf. Yates, *Recollections*, p.215.